

In Hudson, Patrick says proposal to remove cap on liquor licenses still viable

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Gov. Deval Patrick sampled flatbread and other menu items at The Rail Trail Flatbread Co. in Hudson on Sept. 25.
Staff photo

HUDSON — While stumping Wednesday with his party's candidate for lieutenant governor, Steve Kerrigan, Gov. Deval Patrick stopped in Hudson to enjoy a flatbread.

Patrick visited The Rail Trail Flatbread Co. on Hudson's Main Street, mingling with the owners and trying his hand at brick oven flatbread-making. The visit highlighted the downtown success story of The Rail Trail, which has become a popular eatery and bar since it opened in December 2012.

Owners Karim El-Gamal and Michael Kasseris, who were classmates at Babson College, are planning to open a second

restaurant downtown that will primarily serve desserts. An opening date and name have not been announced, but it will be located directly across the street from The Rail Trail.

"They picked a perfect business to highlight," said Kerin Shea, the town's community and economic development assistant.

But The Rail Trail is just one of several recent positive developments for Hudson, which is buzzing with new dining activity. A brewery, Medusa's Brewery Co., will soon join The Rail Trail on Main Street, and Shea said a martini bar is also in the works. Given a boom in Hudson's restaurant options, Shea said the need for additional liquor licenses is increasingly pressing.

The town has petitioned the Legislature for additional licenses since it has issued all of the licenses allowed under state law based on the number of people living in town. Shea hopes lawmakers allow the petition so vacant retail pads at Hudson's Highland Commons on Route 62 might be developed.

Meanwhile, a Patrick proposal from his 2014 economic development bill to lift the state cap on liquor licenses and turn control over license caps to cities and towns is still pending before lawmakers. The measure was part of the Senate's economic development bill in the last legislative session, which ended in July, but the House of Representatives had not included it in its version of the bill.

"Cities and towns are quite capable of making decisions that are about the character of their own city (or) town," Patrick told the Worcester Business Journal after sampling Rail Trail flatbreads shortly before noon.

Patrick predicted that the legislature will pass his proposal eventually, though probably before he leaves office in January.

"What I have discovered is it takes longer to do almost everything than I thought it did when I first got this job," Patrick said. "But it'll happen."

Rep. Kate Hogan, D-Stow, attended Thursday's event. Hogan said she expects the House will take the matter up in the next legislative session that begins in January, but "it will be a process," she said. Hogan is running against Maynard Republican Paddy Dolan in the Third Middlesex District.



Michael Kasseris, right, and Karim El-Gamal, left, on Wednesday hosted Gov. Deval Patrick at their downtown Hudson restaurant, The Rail Trail Flatbread Co. Staff photo